

# BOB FELLER'S ★ ALL-STARS ★

## PRESS RELEASE

"No, I don't expect to win the American League batting championship," Washington's Mickey Vernon was saying as late as August this year, but there is Mickey's name leading the list of American League hitters and it comes as a great surprise even to Vernon. He never had hit .300 before in his major league career.

A member of Bob Feller's touring All-Stars, the Senators' first baseman says of Ted Williams, "He's the greatest hitter I've ever seen," but twice this season Williams spurted in front of Vernon and twice Mickey bounced back promptly to regain the lead.

Lean, quiet Mickey doesn't give up easily. One day after he had gone hitless in five times at bat and forfeited the lead to Williams, he reclaimed it immediately in the second game of a double-header by getting four hits in four times up.

Vernon represents something of a problem child for the outfielders because he sprays his hits to all sectors. They used to play him for a pull hitter, but no more.

"I was a pull hitter all the time until this season," says Mickey, "and I never batted .300 in the majors. Then I decided to try hitting the ball where it was pitched. I started having some luck slicing outside pitches to left field. Well, this is no time to change. I'm no Williams, but I'm an improved hitter."

A native of Marcus Hook, Pa., the 28-year-old Vernon was plucked from Villanova's campus by Scout Joe Cambria and spent four years in the minors before Clark Griffith brought him in to take over first base for the Senators, who had stumbled along long enough with the inept fielding of Zeke Bonura.

Vernon did all right. He swatted .299 in 1941, driving across 93 runs, but slipped to .271 in 1942 and to .268 in 1943 before entering the Navy. It was in the Navy, playing the outfield at various Pacific bases, that Vernon developed as a hitter to be respected. He returned to the Senators last spring 20 pounds heavier to join in a battle with Joe Kuhel and Jack Sanford for Washington's first base job.

Mickey was getting only part time employment as the Senators emerged from spring training camp and was off to a slow start when plagued by a charleyhorse. Shortly after the season opened, however, Vernon started hitting and he hasn't stopped. Kuhel was given his unconditional release and Sanford was dispatched to Washington's farm club at Chattanooga. Vernon remained to lead the league.

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